

Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

Young voters' enthusiasm for Democrats waned during midterms



Voters wait in line at a polling place at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs in Austin, Texas, on election night Nov. 8, 2022.

Associated Press

By WILL WEISSERT and HANNAH FINGERHUT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Young voters who have been critical to Democratic successes in recent elections showed signs in November's midterms that their enthusiasm may be waning, a potential warning sign for a party that will need their strong backing heading into the 2024 presidential race. Voters under 30 went 53% for Democratic House candidates compared with only 41% for Republican candidates nationwide, according to AP VoteCast, a sweeping national survey of the electorate. But that level of support for Democrats was down compared with 2020, when such voters supported President Joe Biden over his predecessor, Donald Trump, 61% to 36%. And in 2018, when Democrats used a midterm surge to retake control of the House, voters 18 to 29 went 64% for the party compared with 34% for the GOP. Biden's party nonetheless exceeded mid-

term expectations, holding the Senate and surrendering only a small Republican House majority. The president himself hailed young voter turnout as "historic." Still, the trend line for younger voters may be an early indicator of the Democrats' challenge to maintain the coalition of Black people, women, college-educated voters, city dwellers and suburbanites that has buoyed the party in the years since Trump won the White House. Weakness in any part of that voting bloc could have implications during the next presidential race. Biden, who will be a few weeks shy of his 82nd birthday on Election Day 2024, says he intends to run again. Trump, 76, has already announced his candidacy. "There might have been retrenchment in youth voters," said Michael McDonald, a political science professor at the University of Florida and an expert on voting and data.

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Part of historical building in city center to be converted into a restaurant with a special twist



History of development has big impact on Aruba's vegetation



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Young voters' enthusiasm for Democrats waned during midterms

Continued from Front

McDonald cautioned against reading too much into what could be an anomaly. But he said the shift may have been fueled by issues like high inflation, which has hit young people especially hard since their wages are less likely to increase fast enough to keep pace with rising prices.

"Youngest people also have the weakest partisan attachments, so they can be more susceptible to partisan swings nationally," McDonald said. "There's no reason why Republicans can't rebound among younger people."

Indeed, VoteCast shows only about a quarter of Democrats under 30 say being a Democrat is "extremely" or "very" important to them, compared with roughly a third of older Democrats.

The data showed that voters under 30 did not support Democrats decisively enough to sway key races nationally, but the news wasn't all bad for the party. Midterm voters under 45 — an age bracket that includes Generation Z and millennials — backed Biden's party at rates that exceeded his 2020 support in races for governor of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Kansas, as well as the race for Senate in Pennsylv-



People line up to vote on Election Day, Nov. 8, 2022, at Petersen Residence Hall on the University of Iowa campus in Iowa City, Iowa.

Associated Press

vania. Democratic Lt. Gov. John Fetterman beat Republican celebrity heart surgeon Dr. Mehmet Oz in Pennsylvania's Senate contest while getting 62% of the vote of those 18 to 44. That was slightly better than Biden's 56% with such voters in 2020. In the Pennsylvania governor's race, Democrat Josh Shapiro also won while outpacing Biden's support in 2020, earning 64% of that age group.

Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly won a second term by modestly outperforming 2020 margins with voters

under 45 in the red state, 52% to Biden's 45%. Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer also commandingly secured reelection while garnering a somewhat larger percentage of the state's voters under 45 in 2022, 61%, than Biden did in 2020, 54%.

Michigan allows people to register to vote on Election Day, which prompted such long lines on college campuses that the last ballot cast at the University of Michigan came at 2:05 a.m.

But states allowing last-minute registration didn't

lift Democrats everywhere. The party's candidates underperformed Biden's margins among voters under 45 in some key races, including in governors' races in New Hampshire and Nevada, which both allow registration through Election Day.

In Nevada's race for governor, Democratic incumbent Steve Sisolak was defeated with support for his party among voters under 45 at 54%, somewhat lagging Biden's 61% support in 2020. The same pattern occurred in New Hampshire: 43% for Democrat Tom

Sherman vs. 59% for Biden. There, Republican Gov. Chris Sununu was easily re-elected.

Cristina Tzintzún Ramirez, president of NextGen America, a progressive organization that works to mobilize young voters, said the group contacted 90% of eligible voters between the ages of 18 and 35 in Pennsylvania, calling, texting or seeing them in person on college campuses. VoteCast showed that 34% of Pennsylvania voters ages 18 to 29 said they were exclusively contacted on behalf of the statewide Democratic candidates, more than older voters.

Tzintzún Ramirez said young voters reported being most concerned about the economy and racial justice, at least until after the Supreme Court overturned the landmark Roe v. Wade decision in June. After that, she said, "Abortion surged to the front."

VoteCast found that about half of young voters in some of the most competitive states said the Roe reversal had a major impact on their decision to turn out. In Michigan, where an amendment to constitutionally protect abortion rights in the state passed on Election Day, about half of voters under 45 said they were "angry" about Roe being overturned. □



President Joe Biden pretends to ride a bike during a Toys for Tots sorting event at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in Arlington, Va., Monday, Dec. 12, 2022.

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden helped pack presents for

children and encouraged holiday cheer as the White House marked the 75th anniversary of Toys for Tots

Bidens spread holiday cheer at Toys for Tots event

at an event hosted by the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. The event at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall in northern Virginia is part of Jill Biden's Joining Forces initiative, which offers support and resources to families of military members and veterans, as well as their caregivers and survivors. Helping the first couple sort through presents were spouses of Pentagon leaders and local children of servicemembers.

"Military kids like you give our country so much," Jill

Biden said, after a young child read a passage from the Dr. Seuss classic "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." She added: "You support your parents through moves and deployments and you sometimes help take care of the family members who came home with maybe illnesses or injuries. And you help out neighbors when they need it, just like you're going to do today." Through the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program, Marines and volunteers have sent out

627 million toys to more than 281 million children since 1947, according to the White House.

Joe Biden noted that last year, the initiative collected 22 million toys for 8 million children, "giving Santa a run for his money." "But unlike Santa, you don't wear big red suits, you don't travel the world in just one night. Instead, you wear dress blues and army greens," the president continued.

"You stand watch around the world every single night." □

Libyan accused in Lockerbie bombing to appear in U.S. court

By ERIC TUCKER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Libyan intelligence official accused of making the bomb that brought down Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988 in an international act of terrorism is to appear Monday in federal court in Washington to face charges.

The extradition of Abu Agila Mohammad Mas'ud Kheir Al-Marimi is a milestone in the decades-old investigation into the attack that killed 259 people in the air and 11 on the ground.

The Justice Department announced Sunday that Mas'ud had been taken into U.S. custody, two years after it revealed that it had charged him in connection with the explosion. Two other Libyan intelligence officials have been charged in the U.S. for their alleged involvement in the attack, but Mas'ud would be the first defendant to appear in an American courtroom for prosecution.

The New York-bound Pan Am flight exploded over Lockerbie less than an hour after takeoff from London on Dec. 21, 1988. Citizens from 21 countries were killed. Among the 190 Americans on board were 35 Syracuse University students flying home for Christmas after a semester

abroad.

The bombing laid bare the threat of international terrorism more than a decade before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. It produced global investigations and punishing sanctions while spurring demands for accountability from victims of those killed. Several victims described as surreal the news that Mas'ud was finally in American custody.

"It was quite a moment," said Kara Monetti Weipz, sister of victim Rick Monetti, a Syracuse University student, and the president of Victims of Pan Am Flight 103. "It was unbelievable that it was really happening after all these years, and especially after the last two years."

Outside the courthouse Monday, Paul Hudson carried a photograph of his daughter, Melina, a 16-year-old student who was returning for the Christmas holidays from an exchange program in England. He recalled how, after the crash, her belongings were scattered around the Lockerbie countryside. The family did get back her passport and her notebook.

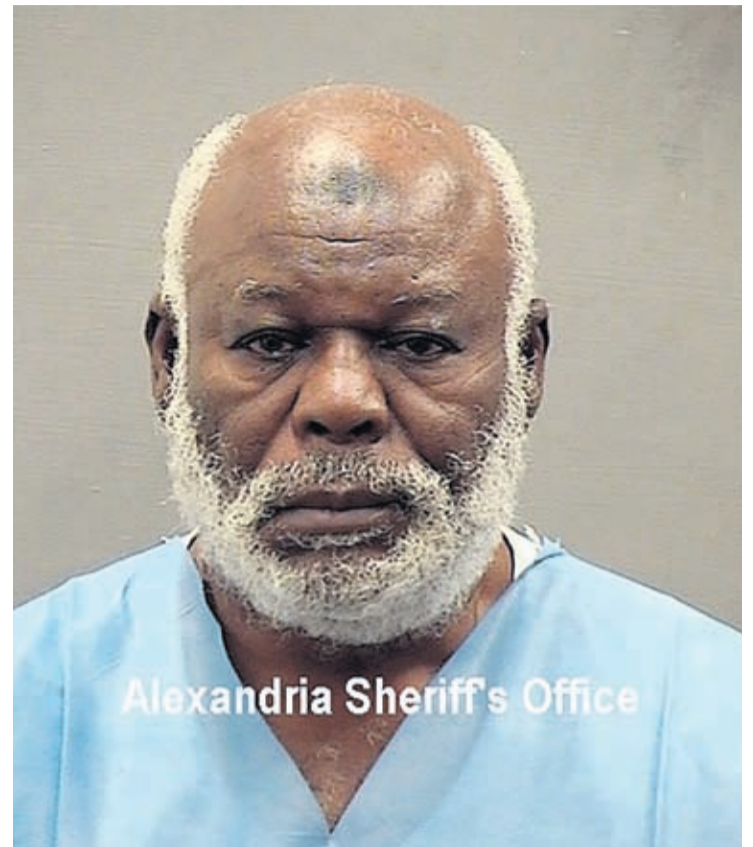
"And the notebook had, on the cover, the quote 'No one dies unless they're forgotten,' and I've tried to live by that," he said. Re-

membrances of his daughter are an "everyday thing" and "this time of year, it gets stronger."

The announcement of charges against Mas'ud on Dec. 21, 2020, came on the 32nd anniversary of the bombing and in the final days of the tenure of then-Attorney General William Barr. At the time of the announcement, Mas'ud was in Libyan custody. The criminal charges were a career bookend of sorts for Barr, who in his first stint as attorney general in the early 1990s had announced criminal charges against two other Libyan intelligence officials.

The Libyan government initially balked at turning over the two men, Abdel Baset Ali al-Megrahi and Lamen Khalifa Fhimah, before ultimately surrendering them for prosecution before a panel of Scottish judges sitting in the Netherlands as part of a special arrangement.

Torn by civil war since 2011, Libya is divided between rival governments in the east and west, each backed by international patrons and numerous armed militias on the ground. Militia groups have amassed great wealth and power from kidnappings and their involvement in Libya's lucrative human trafficking



This image provided by the Alexandria, Va., Sheriff's Office shows Abu Agila Mohammad Mas'ud Kheir Al-Marimi, who is in custody at the Alexandria Adult Detention Center, Dec. 12, 2022 in Alexandria, Va.

Associated Press

trade

A breakthrough in the investigation came when U.S. officials in 2017 received a copy of an interview that Mas'ud, a longtime explosives expert for Libya's intelligence service, had given to Libyan law enforcement in 2012 after being taken into custody following the collapse of the government of the country's leader, Col. Moammar Gadhafi.

In that interview, U.S. officials said, Mas'ud admitted building the bomb in the Pan Am attack and working with two other conspirators to carry out the attack. He also said the operation was ordered by Libyan intelligence and that Gadhafi thanked him and other members of the team after the attack, according to an FBI affidavit filed in the case. □



A flag is waved during an immigration rally outside the White House, in Washington, Sept. 4, 2017.

Associated Press

By COLLEEN LONG

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration is reinstating a task force that is aimed at helping immigrants and refugees integrate into the United States.

The Task Force on New Americans will be run by the Domestic Policy Council and the focus will be workforce training, education and financial access as well as language learning and the health of im-

Biden restarts task force on immigrants' success in U.S.

migrants who have green cards and other types of legal status, according to the White House. A version of the task force had been in existence off and on since the mid-2000s, most recently under former President Barack Obama before it lapsed under Donald Trump, whose restrictive policies were aimed at allowing as few migrants into the U.S. as possible.

The Biden administration's approach to immigration - or more specifically immigrants - is more welcoming; the president has said many times that he feels they enrich the United States and

make the nation stronger. There are several ways immigrants come to the U.S.; as a refugee, through programs that allow temporary legal status for certain migrants arriving from war-torn or nations places destroyed by natural disasters, through visas and then applying for a green card, and at the borders, where they come to ports of entry or cross illegally and ask for asylum. Right now, the administration is grappling with increasingly large numbers at the U.S.-Mexico border and a possible surge following the upcoming end of a COVID-era policy

that allowed border officials to turn most migrants away. The Biden administration was using that policy to turn away increasing numbers of Venezuelans coming to the U.S.-Mexico border. And the U.S. cap on refugee admissions is also up again to 125,000 following deep cuts in the previous administration. That number excludes the roughly 180,000 Ukrainians and Afghans who came to the United States through a different path that moves more quickly than the traditional refugee program but only allows for stays of up to two years. □

Judge rejects vaccine choice law in health care settings

By **AMY BETH HANSON**
Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — A person's choice to decline vaccinations does not outweigh public health and safety requirements in medical settings, a federal judge ruled in a Montana case.

U.S. District Judge Donald Molloy last week permanently blocked a section of law the state said was meant to prevent employers — including many health care facilities — from discriminating against workers by requiring them to be vaccinated against communicable diseases, including COVID-19.

"The public interest in protecting the general populace against vaccine-preventable diseases in health care settings using safe, effective vaccines is not outweighed by the hardships experienced to accomplish that interest," Molloy concluded in his Dec. 9 ruling. The Montana Legislature passed the first-in-the-nation law in 2021, about a year into the pandemic as some people, businesses and Republican lawmakers were pushing back on health care measures enacted to prevent the spread of the virus that has now killed more than 1 million people in the United States. Just over 3,600 Montana residents have died



In this April 1, 2021, file photo Gov. Greg Gianforte receives a shot of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine from pharmacist Drew Garton at a Walgreen's pharmacy, in Helena, Mont.

from COVID-19, state officials say.

The Montana law made it illegal for a person to be denied services, goods or employment based on their vaccine status. The law did not change vaccine requirements at schools or daycare facilities or eliminate a person's right to seek a religious or medical exemption.

Republican lawmakers who supported the bill said it was needed in response to employers threatening to fire workers who would not get vaccinated.

Before signing the bill, Re-

publican Gov. Greg Gianforte asked lawmakers to amend it to allow long-term care facilities to require workers to receive COVID-19 vaccines if failing to do so meant the facility could lose funding under a federal directive.

The federal directive was recently challenged by attorneys general in 22 states including Montana.

The Montana Medical Association, clinics and immunocompromised patients filed a lawsuit against the state in September 2021 and were later joined by the Montana Nurses As-

sociation. They argued, and Molloy agreed, that treating clinics and hospitals differently from long-term care facilities made no sense for a law that the state said was meant to prevent discrimination and protect private health care information.

The plaintiffs successfully argued that the law violates the Americans With Disabilities Act, which requires public facilities to make reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities. An immunosuppressed patient would be vulnerable if they were

treated at a health care facility where the employees were not vaccinated, Molloy found. The law also violated the federal Occupational Health and Safety Act by failing to keep the workplace free from recognized hazards, he said. The plaintiffs proved that vaccine-preventable diseases constitute recognized hazards in health care settings, Molloy wrote.

"The Court's order is a win for all Montanans — young or old, healthy or sick — who no longer need to worry about government interference with the safety of their healthcare in Montana," Vicky Byrd, CEO of the Montana Nurses Association, said in a statement. Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen is studying the opinion to determine his next steps, spokeswoman Emilee Cantrell said in a statement.

In the meantime, Knudsen is leading a group of attorneys general challenging the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services mandate that health care workers in long-term care facilities be vaccinated against COVID-19. The challenge argues the vaccine does not prevent the spread of the virus, breakthrough infections are common and that the vaccines themselves are not entirely risk-free. □

Millions in central U.S. brace for snow, rain and floods



Sal Wood, Blake Wood and Jacobi Wood, 6, roll the largest snowball at Camel's Back Park in Boise, Idaho, on Monday, Dec. 12, 2022, after 2.5 inches of snow fell overnight according to the National Weather Service.

Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A massive winter storm blew across the center of the U.S. on Monday, threatening millions of people with heavy snow, freezing rain and flooding. The National Weather Service warned that there would be "numerous, widespread, and impactful weather hazards in the heart of the country this week." People from Idaho spanning into Wisconsin and as far south as Louisiana were warned to be ready for blizzard-like conditions in the north and flash flooding in the south.

By Tuesday, Texas and northern Louisiana could be pummeled by severe

hail, winds and tornadoes. The storm will continue southeast into Florida later in the week, forecasters said. "It will be a busy week while this system moves across the country," said Marc Chenard, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service at the national center in College Park, Maryland.

Officials in western South Dakota on Monday told residents to brace for 6 inches (15 centimeters) or more of snow: "Get your shovels handy, get your groceries, and check other needed supplies. The roads will be hard to travel."

Regions stretching along

the front range of the Rockies from Montana south into Colorado were under blizzard warnings Monday, and the National Weather Service said that as much as 2 feet (61 centimeters) of snow was possible in some parts of western South Dakota and northwestern Nebraska. Meanwhile, ice and sleet were expected in the eastern Great Plains.

The weather is part of the same system that dumped heavy snow in the Sierra Nevada over the weekend, while downpours at lower elevations already triggered flood watches across large swaths of California into Nevada. □

Police raid more EU Parliament offices in corruption probe

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN

Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Belgian police conducted more raids at European Parliament offices Monday as the legislature's president pledged to launch an internal investigation into corruption allegations and the bloc's top official called for the creation of an EU-wide independent ethics body. Prosecutors investigating alleged influence peddling by a Gulf country at the European Parliament charged four people over the weekend with corruption, participation in a criminal group and money laundering. Parliament Vice President Eva Kaili of Greece was relieved of her duties.

The prosecutors declined to identify the country suspected of offering cash or gifts to parliament officials in exchange for political favors. Several members of the assembly and some Belgian media linked the investigation to Qatar, which is currently hosting soccer's gala event, the World Cup. Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has denied any wrongdoing.

Police conducted Monday's raids at European Parliament offices in Brussels



A man walks down stairs during a special session on lobbying Monday, Dec. 12, 2022 at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France.

Associated Press

to seize computer data belonging to 10 parliamentary assistants, prosecutors said. Officers have conducted 20 raids in total as part of an investigation launched four months ago.

"Several hundred thousand euros have been seized in three different places: 600,000 euros at the home of one of the suspects, several hundred thousand euros in a suitcase seized in a room of a Brussels hotel, and about 150,000 euros in

an apartment belonging to an MEP," prosecutors said. Kaili, who was relieved of her duties over the weekend, was expelled Monday from the legislature's Socialists and Democrats group with immediate effect.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the head of the EU's executive arm, said the accusations against Kaili threatened the confidence EU citizens have put in the

27-nation bloc's institutions. She said the independent ethics body she proposed establishing would cover lobbying activities at the European Commission, the European Council and European Parliament, as well as at the European Central Bank, the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Auditors. The EU does not already have comprehensive lobbying regulations.

"The principles of having

such an ethics body where there are very clear rules on what has to be checked, how and when and what has to be published, how and when would be a big step forward," she said.

As the European Parliament began its last plenary session of the year in Strasbourg, France, European Parliament President Roberta Metsola promised "there will be no sweeping under the carpet."

She said the Parliament and European democracies were "under attack" by "malign actors, linked to autocratic third countries."

"We will launch a reform process to see who has access to our premises, how these organizations, NGOs and people are funded, what links with third countries they have," Metsola added. "We will ask for more transparency on meetings with foreign actors and those linked to them.

We will shake up this Parliament and this town, and I need your help to do it."

On Friday, police in Belgium's capital carried out multiple raids as part of the investigation and reported seizing cash, computer equipment and mobile telephones. □

Report uncovers widespread racism at Dutch foreign ministry

By MIKE CORDER

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The top civil servant at the Dutch foreign ministry apologized Monday after an independent investigation found widespread racism at the government department in the Netherlands and at its diplomatic outposts around the world. "Racism cannot and should not have a place in our organization," the ministry's secretary-general Paul Huijts said.

"We are sorry that we have apparently not been able to offer a work environment in which there is no place for this sort of occurrence," he said. "For that I offer, on behalf of the management board, our apologies."

Civil servants called in an independent research bureau to investigate racism at the ministry following Black Lives Matter protests across the world and in the Netherlands.

The bureau's report said that racism at the ministry ranges "from aggressive, direct, overt and conscious to subtle, indirect, hidden, unintentional or unconscious and that bicultural employees and locally hired employees of color experience various forms of racism." In a letter to lawmakers, Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra said it was "extra painful" to find racism at his ministry, "because every form of discrimination is prohibited and we advocate internationally for jus-

tice."

He said the ministry "will do everything we can to eliminate racism within our own organization."

In 2020, amid the global reckoning with racism following the death of George Floyd at the hands of police in the United States, Prime Minister Mark Rutte conceded that racism was a problem in the Netherlands, a nation that has long considered itself a bastion of tolerance.

"There are also people living in the Netherlands who in that regard feel that they don't fully fit in, that they can't play a full role in this society," he said at the time. "That is also a Dutch problem. There is racism here, too. There is discrimi-

nation here, too."

Hoekstra said his ministry would adopt recommendations laid out in the report to tackle racism and make it easier for staff to

report incidents.

"We stand for a ministry in which every member of staff is respected and valued," he wrote in his letter to parliament. □



Netherlands Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra talks to journalists on second day of the meeting of NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs, in Bucharest, Romania, Wednesday, Nov. 30, 2022.

Associated Press

Peru president proposes moving up elections amid protests

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and FRANKLIN BRICEÑO
Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Peru's new President Dina Boluarte gave in to protesters' demands early Monday, announcing in a nationally televised address that she would send Congress a proposal to move up elections after thousands of protesters again took to the streets demanding she resign.

The protests turned deadly Sunday, with at least two deaths in a remote community in the Andes, according to officials. The protesters want elections to replace not only Boluarte but all members of Congress.

But Boluarte's announcement did not placate protesters. Hours after her address, demonstrators blocked access to an international airport in southern Peru and occupied its runway.

Boluarte said she would propose general elections for April 2024 a reversal of her earlier assertion that she should remain president for the remaining 3 1/2 years of her predecessor's term.

"My duty as president of the republic in the current



Tear gas is returned to police trying to break up supporters of ousted President Pedro Castillo at plaza San Martin in Lima, Peru, Sunday, Dec. 11, 2022.

Associated Press

difficult time is to interpret, read and collect the aspirations, interests and concerns ...of the vast majority of Peruvians," Boluarte said. "So, interpreting in the broadest way the will of the citizens... I have decided to assume the initiative to reach an agreement with the Congress of the republic to advance the general elections."

Many protesters were also demanding the release

from custody of ex-president Pedro Castillo, who was ousted Wednesday by lawmakers after he sought to dissolve Congress ahead of an impeachment vote.

The protests have been particularly heated in rural areas, strongholds for Castillo, a former schoolteacher and political newcomer from a poor Andean mountain district. Protesters set fire to a police station, vandalized a small airport used

by the armed forces, and marched in the streets.

A 15-year-old boy died of an injury suffered during a protest in the remote Andes community of Andahuaylas, Congresswoman Maria Taipe Coronado said as she made an impassioned plea from the legislative palace for Boluarte to step down.

"The death of this compatriot is the responsibility of Mrs. Dina for not submit-

ting her resignation," said Taipe, who is affiliated with the party that helped Castillo and Boluarte win election before both were kicked out of that party. "Since when is protesting a crime?"

Taipe charged that security forces were using heavy-handed repressive tactics in quelling demonstrations. But it remains unclear how the teen was fatally injured. Officials also confirmed the death of a second protester, which the director of a local hospital said was an 18-year-old man.

But his sister, Raquel Quispe, identified him as 17-year-old Beckham Romario Quispe Garfias. She told The Associated Press she was not given a cause of death, but bloody images she shared showed a severe head injury that exposed his brain, which she said counters the suggestion he was hit "by a rock." At least 26 people were reported injured in Sunday's protests.

Boluarte, in her address to the nation, declared a state of emergency in areas outside Lima, where protests have been particularly violent. □

Israeli army acknowledges shooting death of Palestinian girl

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli military on Monday acknowledged that its troops fatally shot a teenage Palestinian girl during an operation in the occupied West Bank, saying she was unintentionally hit by fire aimed at gunmen in

the area. It was a rare admission of an error by the military, which has carried out daily arrest operations in the West Bank for nearly nine months. Israel's prime minister expressed sorrow over the girl's death, but said

the operations in the area would continue. About 150 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli-Palestinian fighting in the West Bank and east Jerusalem this year, making it the deadliest year since 2006.

The Israeli army says most of the Palestinians killed have been militants. But stonethrowing youths protesting Israeli army incursions and others not involved in confrontations, including a prominent Al Jazeera journalist, have also been killed in the fighting.

Palestinian officials said Jana Zakaran, 16, was killed overnight Monday in the northern city of Jenin. According to the official Palestinian news agency Wafa, her family had been searching for her for an hour and found her body

on the roof of their home after Israeli troops withdrew from the area.

In a statement, the Israeli military said an initial inquiry found the girl "was hit by unintentional fire aimed at armed gunmen" on a nearby rooftop. "It appears the girl who was killed had been on the roof of one of the houses near the gunmen," it said. It said the forces opened fire after local militants hurled firebombs and opened fire at the soldiers.

The army said that its commanders "regret any harm to uninvolved civilians," but said that it would press ahead with its operations. Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid issued a statement expressing sorrow over the girl's death and sent condolences to her family. He

also expressed support for Israel's soldiers and said operations in the West Bank would continue while Israel would do its "utmost" to avoid civilian casualties.

Jenin is known as a stronghold of militants. The army has long operated in the area, stepping up its activities after a series of deadly attacks inside Israel last spring, some of which were carried out by militants from Jenin.

Zakaran was killed in the Jenin refugee camp, the same area where Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was killed last May. The army has said its forces most likely shot her unintentionally, but has provided no evidence to back up the claim that she might have been hit by Palestinian gunmen in the area. □



Palestinians carry the body of Jana Zakaran, 16, during her funeral in the West Bank city of Jenin, Monday, Dec. 12, 2022.
Associated Press

History of development has big impact on Aruba's vegetation

ORANJESTAD – Giancarlo Nunes, Conservation Manager of the Aruba National Park Foundation (FPNA) explained during a press conference that Aruba has a long history of development, and there are many different forms of industry which all have an effect on the local nature.

He indicated that for example, aloe plantation, which in the past was located on a large portion of Aruba had its effect. Also during the times of colonization there was development, and during this time, a lot of plants were cut down for wood; at this time, goats, donkeys and horses were introduced as well.

"Obviously when the plants are eliminated, it has a big impact because when



"Plants come and plants go, surely on an island, and this is a natural process. But what we see happening worldwide and what is being investigated, is that unique plant types are becoming more unique, and general plant types are becoming more general, and we are seeing this a bit on Aruba as well", he said.

Proosdij indicated that they do not have concrete numbers yet to support this, but they are aware of some types of plants that disappeared or have almost disappeared in Aruba, while a lot of other new plants that were found came from an entirely different part of the world, or have a big distribution area, from Florida to South America – these are plants that spread fast and that survive.

"So you see that the type of different, unique plants they are having a hard time. These are the types that really can find a place in a protection area in order for them to survive", he said. □

Photographs of different Aruban landscapes from <https://www.facebook.com/arubanationalpark>



you eliminate some plants in Aruba it takes years for them to grow back, sometimes it even takes centuries," he emphasized.

Right now, Aruba's latest main industry, tourism, comes with different kinds of development, all of which have an effect on nature and the environment.

Nunes commented that the history of Aruba for the past 500 years of development is one of constant change, and what has to wonder precisely what that change is. Luckily, now they can publish information using data from the 1990s and the investigation they are currently carrying out, at least they can say something about the period since the 1990s until now.

Nunes added that they also have some photographs from the 1950s with which they can make a comparison with current times, but this doesn't yield a lot of information. "But all that development had an impact on our vegetation, on our nature. We need to realize that we cannot just go do anything and then hope that it won't bring change, or that nature will not react to it. It is important for us to realize this right now and

take it into account for the future", he highlighted.

Dr. Andre van Proosdij from Wageningen University and Research (WUR) also explained why Aruba's indigenous plants have disappeared while plants from other regions, imported plants remain and take over the place of the indigenous plants.



LOCAL



The Ostrich Farm

Matividiri – One of the most entertaining vacation activities is a visit to the Ostrich Farm, a popular stopover on most island jeep tours.

Locals and visitors enjoy the guided ostrich tour at the farm and features a well-stocked locally crafted and produced Art Boutique. The highlight of the visit is always the fun interaction with the resident ostriches



and emus, including a trip to the incubators and the bird kindergarten, housing baby ostriches, baby emus, chicken and ducks, and even a land turtle! It was a National Geographic moment when on cue Mr. Ostrich flapped his wings excitedly and poked around the ground with his bill, triggering Mrs. Ostrich who ran around in circles, flapped her wings and also poked around, before collapsing on the ground in a heap of feathers, allowing him to mount her, shaking, winding and spiraling his head in all direction!

Mr. Ostrich concluded his unexpected performance with a loud honking, his eyes rolling, then got up in a huff to nonchalantly strut away, leaving his wife



and the scrutiny of our cameras.

It was a surprise reality TV moment, and not usually included in the regular program. Feeding the Ostriches is however always on the program, and they are eternally hungry, and fun!

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Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors of Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently recognized the Distinguished Ambassadors of Aruba, by presenting the Ambassadors with the Distinguished certificate as a token of appreciation for visiting the island for 10 consecutive years.

Honorees were: **Tom & Amy Jones** residents of North Carolina, United States.
Robert & Suzanne Rismondo residents of Pennsylvania



During the ceremony Ms. Olga Ruiz representing the Aruba Tourism Authority (A.T.A), and members Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa bestowed the certification of the Ambassador, and presented the Ambassador with gifts,

and thanked her on behalf of the Government of Aruba for choosing Aruba as her favorite vacation destination for so many years. Aruba can now be considered by the Honorees, their Home Away from Home!

Top reason for returning to Aruba, provided by the

honorees were:
Sunshine & warm breeze
Friendliness of people
Staff at Manchebo
Wonderful Food
The beach at Manchebo
Happy people
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The food is super good
Lovely hospitality
The sun to tan all time ☑

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Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Marriot's Aruba Ocean Club

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently recognized the Distinguished Ambassadors of Aruba by presenting the Ambassadors with the Distinguished certificate as a token of appreciation for visiting the island for 10 years consecutively.

Honorees were: **John & Cheryl Garnette** residents of Maryland, United States

Ms. Olga Ruiz representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and members of the Marriot's Aruba Ocean Club bestowed the certification of the Ambassadors and pre-

sented the Ambassadors with gifts, and thanked them on behalf of the Government of Aruba for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination for so many years. The Honorees can now call Aruba their home away from home.

Top reason for returning to Aruba, provided by the honorees were:

- Happy people
- Love the island, weather and beaches
- The food is super delicious
- Lovely hospitality
- Sun to tan all the time ☑



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Aruba's underwater wonderland



ORANJESTAD - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating under water spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.

Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamentu, Papiamentu is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you

will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded



the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken world war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, espe-

cially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven. □



Part of historical building in city center to be converted into a restaurant with a special twist

ORANJESTAD – Last week it was announced that part of the monumental building known as ex-Botica Aruba, situated in Steenweg in the city center, will become a restaurant. Stichting Monumentenfonds Aruba said that this is the second phase of restoration for this building.

Anne Witsenburg, director of Stichting Monumentenfonds said that this building was constructed in 1925 by Adison Croes, and in 1935 they opened the first pharmacy – “botica” in Papiamentu – called Botica Aruba through the Nouel family, who lived upstairs while the pharmacy was downstairs.

In the beginning of the 1990s, they sold the house, where afterwards El Mercado was opened in 1993. At this stage the building was expanded, thereby losing some of its original state, as confirmed by Witsenburg. Later that business closed its doors in 2015, and Stichting Monumentenfonds purchased the building from them, presenting a plan to restore it and give the building a new life. A group of artists was introduced to the building to use it from 2016 until 2019 under the platform BEAM while the plans were in process.

After that, the restoration began on the outside of the building, “which is why it’s pretty like this and has its original colors”, Witsenburg said.

When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out in Aruba, it was very difficult to find a tenant to make use of the building, and for some time it was empty. However, this year Stichting Monumentenfonds signed a lease agreement with a new tenant, whereby the building will begin the third function of its life and become a restaurant.

“We are very proud to announce that beginning of 2023, in the first months, as we don’t have a precise



date yet, the restaurant Koal will open”, Witsenburg announced.

Albert Raven together with Tommie Rensen, owners of what will become Koal restaurant, told the media present that they will be using the lower level of the building where they will open a restaurant with the “chef’s table” concept, available to only 16 people per night. “It will be very intimate and special, where I will be cooking and Tom will be serving our guests”, Raven said.

This is because, as Raven said, many times the chef does not get the opportunity to connect with the guests, and this “chef’s table” setting will give the opportunity for everyone to have more contact with each other on a more personal level. “I think everyone is in search of that”, he said.

The restaurant’s concept is basically whatever they want to cook, which means each night there will be different food. “It will be mostly what is available locally. We will focus on local products and also a bit international”, Raven pointed out. He also said that he has a lot of experience in this sector, working in Abu Dhabi

and Dubai. He has a lot of Asian influence and he will try to mix this with the Aruban culture.

Raven also grew up in Aruba, and he said that it’s great to see how the streets in the city centre began coming back to life.

About choosing this location, he said that they were searching for a spot and

an acquaintance told him to ask about the building at Steenweg. When they saw the building, they realized it is ideal to open their restaurant.

They plan to open around February, but this also depends on materials and the process of opening, as the place needs to be ready. “Local clients will always be welcome, but visitors also,

we are open for everybody”, Raven said.

Witsenburg added that the tenants will only be using one floor, which means that they will continue searching for a tenant for the top floor of the building. She said they are already in contact with an interest party and they hope that soon the top floor will also be occupied.

As a foundation, they provide guidance to the tenants about changes that can be done to the building inside, if they can change the color of the walls for example. But as a foundation they take care of the entire maintenance of the outside of the building and also any repairs that might be needed, seeing as it is a monumental building.

Regarding all monuments that are protected by Aruba, Monumentenbureau is the organization that hands out the rules. They also have rules that Stichting Monumentenfonds follow, anything they do they receive permission from Monumentenbureau. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

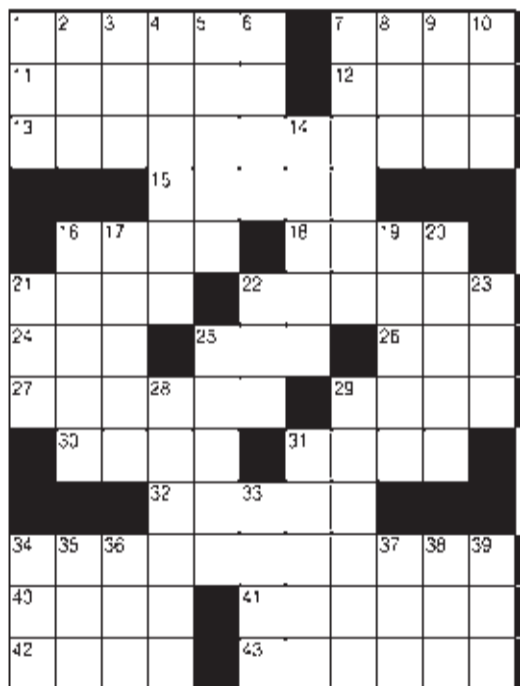
ACROSS **DOWN**

- 1 Circle spoke
- 7 Make do
- 11 Slugger Pete
- 12 Mystique
- 13 Tribal healer
- 15 Body pump
- 16 Docking site
- 18 U.S.-owned island
- 21 Fish features
- 22 Learn completely
- 24 Sick
- 25 Skillet
- 26 Place down
- 27 Paging device
- 29 Copenhagen native
- 30 Mix up
- 31 Ultimate
- 32 Descendant
- 34 Excavator of a sort
- 40 Skin woe
- 41 Baltimore player
- 42 Citi Field team
- 43 Acquit



Yesterday's answer

- 1 Bitterly cold
- 2 Oscar winner
- 3 Period
- 4 Ruler divisions
- 5 Theater worker
- 6 Bar mixer
- 7 Prickly plant
- 8 Unconscious
- 9 Old hand
- 10 Lobed organ
- 14 Heart, for one
- 16 Heaps
- 17 Harbor
- 19 Book of maps
- 20 Intended
- 21 Little lie
- 22 Spoil
- 23 Reuben bread
- 25 Bar in a cage
- 28 Fishy sign
- 29 "Rats!"
- 31 River
- 33 Revered one
- 34 Block up
- 35 Drink
- 36 Blasting stuff
- 37 Sticky stuff
- 38 Middle-earth resident
- 39 Game caller



12-13

A XYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-13 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

GT VRA JYCQ Y MYXXV LCFGCS.

QMYQ FLXLCFE. RT ZRAKEL.

RC JMLKL VRA EQRX VRAK

EQRKV. — RKERC JLPPL

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: MAY YOUR WALLS KNOW JOY. MAY EVERY ROOM HOLD LAUGHTER. AND EVERY WINDOW OPEN TO GREAT POSSIBILITY. — MARY ANNE RADMACHER

A diminished U.S. workforce could lead Fed to keep rates high

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Still eager to hire, America's employers are posting more job openings than they did before the pandemic struck 2½ years ago. Problem is, there aren't enough applicants. The nation's labor force is smaller than when the pandemic struck. The reasons vary an unexpected wave of retirements, a drop in legal immigration, the loss of workers to COVID-19 deaths and illnesses. The result, though, is that employers are having to compete for a smaller pool of workers and to offer steadily higher pay to attract them. It's a trend that could fuel wage growth and high inflation well into 2023.

In a recent speech, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell pointed to the shortfall of workers and the resulting rise in average pay as the primary remaining driver of the price spikes that continue to grip the economy.

Though inflation pressures have eased slightly from four-decade highs average gasoline prices are now below where they were a year ago costs are still rising fast in much of the economy's vast service sector. As a result, the Fed is expected Wednesday to raise its benchmark short-term rate for a seventh time this year, though by a smaller amount than it has recently. The central bank has boosted its key rate by a substantial three-quarters of a point four straight times, to a range of 3.75% to 4%, the highest level in 15 years. Powell has signaled that the Fed will likely



Shoppers leave the Primark store, Saturday, Dec. 10, 2022, at Downtown Crossing in Boston.

Associated Press

raise its benchmark rate by a half-point this week, and many economists expect quarter-point rate hikes after that. Cumulatively, those rate increases may be helping slow inflation. But they have also sharply increased borrowing costs for consumers and businesses on mortgages, auto loans and credit cards, among other loans. Many economists have warned that the resulting decline in borrowing and spending will likely cause a recession in 2023. Yet with price increases still uncomfortably high, Powell and other Fed officials have underscored that they expect to keep rates at their peak for an extended period, possibly through next year.

On Wednesday, members of the Fed's rate-setting committee will update their projections for interest rates and other economic barometers for 2023 and beyond. The higher wages that many employers are having to offer don't always lead to higher inflation. If companies invest in more efficient machines or technology, workers can become more productive: They can increase their

output per hour. Under that scenario, businesses could raise pay without having to raise prices. But productivity has been especially weak in the past year. And Powell has noted that higher pay will likely feed too-high inflation in the service sector everything from restaurants and hotels to retail stores, medical care and entertainment. The employers in these industries are labor-intensive, and they tend to pass their higher labor costs on to their customers through higher prices. Higher wages also typically spur Americans to keep spending, a trend that can perpetuate a cycle that keeps prices high.

"This labor shortage that we have," the Fed chair said, "it doesn't look like it's going away anytime soon. It's been very disappointing and a little bit surprising." The leading cause of the worker shortfall, according to research by the Fed, is a surge in retirements. In his recent speech, Powell noted that there are now about 3.5 million fewer people who either have a job or are looking for one compared with pre-pandemic trends. Of the 3.5 million, about 2 million consist of "excess" retirements — an increase in retirements far more than would have been expected based on pre-existing trends. Roughly 400,000 other working-age people have died of COVID-19. And legal immigration has fallen by about 1 million. □

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Review: Del Toro takes his 'Pinocchio' to very dark places

By **JOCELYN NOVECK**
AP National Writer

Let's face it, "Pinocchio" has always been an odd choice for a children's morality tale.

Of course, lying is wrong. But that's not the only message the story sends. Even the classic 1940 Disney version lighter and more kid-friendly than the 1883 Collodi tale still sends the message that if you're not "good," you don't deserve to be human. "A boy who won't be good might just as well be made of wood," the beneficent Blue Fairy admonishes Pinocchio in that film. Really? What happened to the idea that "to err is human?" Not to mention second chances, or learning curves? And what does "good" mean, anyway? Have they heard of value relativism? But we digress. Because now comes Guillermo del Toro, with his blazing creative talent, to really stir things up. And boy, this is not your Disney "Pinocchio" not the 1940 classic nor the remake of a few months ago. How will your kid feel about fascist salutes (or you about explaining them?) A guy named Mussolini? Bombs falling from the sky? A fa-



This image released by Netflix shows Gepetto, voiced by David Bradley, left, and Pinocchio, voiced by Gregory Mann, in a scene from "Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio."

Associated Press

ther handing a gun to his son and saying "Shoot the puppet?" (Yes, sweet Pinocchio THAT puppet.) Of course, del Toro, whose take on "Pinocchio" is so distinct that the movie is called "Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio," has just the visual command you'd expect, partnering with co-director Mark Gustafson in this gorgeous stop motion project with a starry voice cast (including three Oscar winners Christoph Waltz, Cate Blanchett and Tilda Swinton.) The movie often

looks stunningly beautiful, in color and texture. And you'll want to get on a plane right now and find the Italian village where Gepetto lives, with cobblestoned alleyways framed by snow-capped mountains jutting out in the mist. Pinocchio, too, is way more interesting-looking than the blue-eyed, bow-tie wearing puppet we're used to. He's a lanky masterpiece in striated pine, with wooden curls, too, and something about him is heartbreakingly lovable. Maybe it's

because he makes mistake after mistake. And to err is ... oh, never mind. We first meet Gepetto (David Bradley) as the happy father to a real son, Carlo. "All they needed was each other's company," says the narrator, namely Sebastian J. Cricket, voiced by Ewan McGregor. They spend their evenings reading stories by the fire, and Carlo accompanies Gepetto to his job restoring a huge Jesus altarpiece in the church. It's there that tragedy strikes one day; a

warplane drops a bomb onto the church, killing Carlo. Gepetto withdraws to drinking and mourning. In grief, Gepetto cuts down a pine tree and makes a puppet. In the night, the Wood Sprite (Swinton, not to be confused with her sister, Death, also Swinton) comes to visit. As in other versions, she asks the cricket to watch over Pinocchio and serve as his conscience. Like in other versions, Pinocchio gets caught up with a money-hungry impresario, Count Volpe (Waltz) who puts him in a puppet show. Unlike other versions, one audience member happens to be Il Duce (Mussolini.) Also unlike other versions, he orders Pinocchio shot. Pinocchio also gets hit by a truck. Luckily, Swinton's Death keeps sending him back to life. If this seems a bit unsavory for the younger kids, you ain't seen nothin' yet — Pinocchio ends up at a fascist military camp, where the boys are set against each other in deadly war games. Compared to this section, the time he and Gepetto later spend in the belly of a whale seems rather quaint. □

Elon Musk takes the stage, amid boos, at Chappelle's show

By **HAVEN DALEY**
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Dave Chappelle asked the crowd at his comedy show to "make some noise for the world's richest man." They did. Lots of booing. It was a rather uncomfortable appearance for Elon Musk, Twitter's new owner, at Chappelle's show with Chris Rock on Sunday night at the Chase Center in San Francisco. At the end of the show, Chappelle was talking about the need to get along and communicate with people with different viewpoints and perspectives. He invited Musk onstage. The billionaire obliged, wearing an "I Love Twitter" T-shirt. Loud boos filled the

arena — along with some cheers, too. Chappelle joked to Musk: "Sounds like some of those people you fired." As the boos continued to ring out, the comic pointed out that "All you people booing, and I'm just pointing out the obvious are in terrible seats." Twitter is going through massive changes since Musk took over the social media platform, with the first few weeks of tenure seeing widespread layoffs and the restoration of several blocked accounts, including those of former president Donald Trump and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene. The other performers from the night, including Rock, Donnell Rawlings from "Chappelle's Show"

and the hip hop group Black Star, came up on stage to say goodnight, while Musk also remained on stage. Chappelle asked Musk to repeat Rawlings' catch phrase from their classic show "I'm rich b" Rawlings went first, and then Musk complied. That's when Chappelle asked the crowd not to boo Musk as he needs him to open up the first comedy club on Mars. He also asked Musk if he could help Black Star's Talib Kweli, who Chappelle said had been banned from Twitter. Musk, who bought Twitter for \$44 billion in October, responded by saying: "Twitter customer service here." He stayed onstage and shook hands with many of

the performers. Attendees had been required to lock up their phones during the

show, but a few videos of the encounter made their way online. □



This combination of photos shows comedian Dave Chappelle attending the 22nd Annual Mark Twain Prize for American Humor in Washington on Oct. 27, 2019, left, and businessman Elon Musk at the opening of the Tesla factory Berlin Brandenburg in Gruenheide, Germany, on March 22, 2022.

Associated Press

USA Basketball to play men's World Cup group games in Manila

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

USA Basketball will play all its games at next year's World Cup in Manila and won't need to travel during the tournament, assuming the American men qualify for the event.

FIBA, the sport's governing body, made the announcement Monday. The World Cup is being contested in the Philippines, Indonesia and Japan next summer and each of those host nations got to pick one team that it wanted to have for the group stages. The Philippines chose the United States — not a surprise given the NBA's enormous popularity there. Japan picked Slovenia, a team led by Luka Doncic. And Indonesia selected Canada, coached by Toronto's Nick Nurse and should feature a slew of top NBA players such as Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Jamal Murray.

"I'd like to think it works to our advantage," said Grant Hill, USA Basketball men's national team managing director. "I think we have to be mindful and respectful that these players are on airplanes all throughout the regular season and kind of



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2) drives against Memphis Grizzlies forward Dillon Brooks (24) in the second half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2022, in Memphis, Tenn.

move from city to city, bed to bed, hotel to hotel. It's a grind. ... I think once we get there, and we get settled, we can kind of plant some roots for a couple of weeks. I think it is something that can work to our advantage."

Slovenia will play group-stage games in Okinawa, and Canada will play its opening games in Jakarta. Okinawa is about 900 miles

(1,450 kilometers) from Manila, while Jakarta is roughly 1,700 miles (2,735 kilometers) away.

The Okinawa and Jakarta groups will each send two teams to Manila for the final phase of the tournament. The other four nations that qualify for the final phase already will have been there; the U.S., the Philippines and 14 other nations in the 32-team field will be in Manila

for the group stage.

At the most recent men's World Cup at China in 2019, some teams said travel between multiple cities was draining. The setup for next year, FIBA said, addresses those concerns.

"We will have a reduction in the transfers," FIBA Secretary General Andreas Zagklis said Monday. "You'll remember that teams changed (locations) two or

three times in China. There will be one transfer and this is only for those who will be playing in Japan or Indonesia ... and after the transfer we'll also have an extra rest day before the final phase starts."

Slovenia and Canada are among 17 teams that already have qualified for the tournament. The rest of the field will be decided in February, and the U.S. is on the brink of earning a spot — but hasn't gotten it done yet.

The Americans are 8-2 in their 12-game slate of qualifying games, in which they are using players from G League and international clubs. The World Cup roster will have NBA players.

A win at Uruguay on Feb. 23 or at Brazil on Feb. 26 would be enough to clinch a berth for the U.S. The only way the Americans wouldn't qualify for the World Cup — the primary way teams will earn a spot into the 2024 Paris Olympics — is by losing both games in February, have at least four outcomes of other games not go their way and then lose a series of tiebreakers. The World Cup draw is April 29 in Manila. The tournament starts Aug. 25. □

Associated Press

Swiatek wins WTA Player of Year; Pegula's coach Witt honored

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**
AP Tennis Writer

Iga Swiatek was honored as WTA Player of the Year for the first time on Monday after rising to No. 1 in the rankings in April and remaining there for the rest of the season thanks in part to two Grand Slam titles.

Swiatek, a 21-year-old from Poland who was the WTA Newcomer of the Year in 2020, led the tour with 67 match wins and eight titles. That included a run of six trophies in a row during a 37-match winning streak that lasted from February to July and was the longest undefeated stretch in women's tennis in a quarter of a century.

"I felt like everything clicked this season," Swiatek said in a video interview with The

Associated Press during her unbeaten streak. "And I wasn't expecting to be that consistent."

She ascended to the top of the rankings after Ash Barty suddenly retired at age 25 and relinquished that spot. Swiatek later won her second major championship at the French Open in June, then claimed the U.S. Open title in September, making her the first woman with two Slam trophies in one season since Angelique Kerber in 2016.

The WTA Coach of the Year award went to David Witt. He works with Jessica Pegula, a 28-year-old American who rose to a career-best No. 3 in the rankings during 2022 and was a quarterfinalist at three Grand Slam tournaments losing to Barty

or Swiatek each time. Pegula also won the Guadalajara Open, made it to her first WTA 1000 final at the Madrid Open and qualified for the WTA Finals in singles and doubles (with Coco Gauff). Witt's honor was voted on by other registered coaches. Player awards determined by a vote of international media members included:

Barbora Krejcikova and Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic were the WTA Doubles Team of the Year for the second consecutive season and third time overall after winning the Australian Open, Wimbledon and U.S. Open;

Beatriz Haddad Maia of Brazil was the WTA Most Improved Player of the Year after rising from No. 80 to

No. 15 in the rankings and winning her first two tour-level titles; Zheng Qinwen of China, who turned 20 in October, was the WTA Newcomer of the Year af-

ter rising more than 100 places in the rankings and reaching the fourth round in her French Open debut before bowing out against Swiatek. □



Iga Swiatek of Poland reacts to scoring a point during the first set against Coco Gauff of the United States during round-robin play on day six of the WTA Finals tennis tournament in Fort Worth, Texas, Saturday, Nov. 5, 2022.

Associated Press

Analysis: Third-string NFL QBs rise to challenge of starting

By **ROB MAADDI**
AP Pro Football Writer

Brock Purdy outplayed Tom Brady, leaving his dad in tears with a stellar performance in his first career start. Anthony Brown displayed a veteran's poise under pressure in his NFL debut. Third-string quarterbacks had quite the Sunday leading a pair of division leaders to important wins. Other backups, including former Super Bowl MVP Joe Flacco, saw action in Week 14. Purdy stole the show. The rookie quarterback chosen with the last pick in the draft this year threw two touchdown passes and ran for another score, helping the San Francisco 49ers rout Brady and the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 35-7, spoiling the GOAT's Bay Area homecoming.

"I grew up watching him, seeing him make plays and win Super Bowls, so to be out on the same field and being able to compete against one another, it's literally a dream come true," Purdy said. "I'm very blessed and honored to play against him."

After his second TD pass of the game, Purdy's father wiped tears from his eyes. Purdy, who played four seasons at Iowa State before the Niners selected him with the 262nd pick, had many family members in the stands.

"It's everything," he said



San Francisco 49ers quarterback Brock Purdy (13) throws a touchdown pass to running back Christian McCaffrey during the first half of an NFL football game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in Santa Clara, Calif., Sunday, Dec. 11, 2022.

about their support. "Being the last pick, my family has always been the rock and the people to tell me 'you're good enough,' especially my dad. To do this and have this kind of performance with them here watching, it means the world to me. I'm thankful." The NFC West-leading 49ers (9-4) are relying on Purdy to take them to the Super Bowl after losing Jimmy Garoppolo to a foot injury. Trey Lance, who opened the year as San Francisco's starter, already went down for the season with a broken ankle on Sept. 18.

Purdy's teammates are

confident he can do the job.

"I'm not surprised," Niners receiver Ray-Ray McCloud III said. "If you just watch Brock when he first walked in this building, from when he was drafted here, when he practices even in pre-season, his personality just reflects on the field hands down. He's an animal and he's passionate about his craft. He is going to let you know how, but he is not cocky. He is very confident and as a quarterback that's all you need back there."

The Baltimore Ravens had to turn to an undrafted

rookie after backup Tyler Huntley, who filling in for Lamar Jackson, entered concussion protocol in the third quarter against Pittsburgh. Brown took his first snap from the Ravens 1 with the team leading 13-7. He tossed a 3-yard pass. Brown finished 3 of 5 for 16 yards and guided the offense on a field-goal drive that ended up being the decisive score in a 16-14 victory over the Steelers.

The AFC North-leading Ravens (9-4) don't know when Jackson will return so they'll be counting on Huntley and Brown, if needed.

"He's kind of calm, cool

and collected," Ravens coach John Harbaugh said of Brown. "(He's) very much a student of the game, works very hard at it in terms of preparing himself." Baker Mayfield got things started for reserve QBs Thursday night, leading the Los Angeles Rams to an improbable comeback 17-16 win over the Las Vegas Raiders just two days after the team claimed him off waivers from Carolina.

The Rams (4-9) are headed nowhere after winning the Super Bowl last season but Mayfield makes them at least interesting to watch.

Other backups had varying results. Flacco briefly replaced Mike White in the New York Jets' 20-12 loss at Buffalo. White was battered by the Bills throughout the game and ended up going to a hospital in an ambulance afterward for what the team said was a precautionary trip.

The Houston Texans used a two-QB system with Davis Mills and Jeff Driskel sharing snaps in a 27-23 last-minute loss at Dallas.

Mitchell Trubisky took over for Kenny Pickett after Pittsburgh's rookie starter entered the concussion protocol in the first quarter. The Denver Broncos turned to Brett Rypien after Russell Wilson slammed his head into the turf at the end of a run. Rypien tossed a TD pass in a 34-28 loss to Kansas City. □

Associated Press

Guardians add pop, sign slugger Josh Bell to 2-year contract



San Diego Padres' Josh Bell takes batting practice before Game 2 of a baseball NL Division Series against the Los Angeles Dodgers, Oct. 12, 2022, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

By **TOM WITHERS**
AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — The Guardians added some major pop to their pesky lineup.

Cleveland officially signed slugger Josh Bell to a two-year, \$33 million contract on Monday after agreeing to the deal last week during the winter meetings in San Diego.

The AL Central champions were in the market for a big bat after hitting just 127 homers (second fewest in the league) last season

and believe they've added one with the switch-hitting Bell.

The 30-year-old hit 37 homers in 2019 for Pittsburgh and has 130 over seven seasons in the majors.

He'll likely platoon at first base with Josh Naylor and be used as a designated hitter. This will be Bell's first time in the AL after playing with the Pirates, San Diego and Washington.

Embracing a patience-over-power approach at the plate, the Guardians were one of baseball's

biggest surprises last season. They pulled away in September to finish 92-70 and win their division by 11 games.

Cleveland beat Tampa Bay in the wild-card round before losing to the New York Yankees in the Division Series, when the Guardians were outthomered 9-3.

Bell split last season between the Nationals and Padres, posting career-highs in hits (147) and walks (81). For the season, he batted .266 with 17 homers and 71 RBIs in 156 games. □